homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, November 16, 1944

Subject: HOW LENGTHEN LIFE OF ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES. Information from home electrification specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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If you've been following the newspapers lately, you know that electric irons are coming off the assembly lines once again. Yes, and the way has also been cleared for making a few other types of electrical appliances for civilian use.

That's good news, but don't think it means that you can afford to let down when it comes to caring for the appliances you have. Only a relatively small number of new appliances are being made, due largely to the need for manpower in war industries. As a result, only a very few new irons, vacuum cleaners and other appliances are expected to appear on your dealer's shelves within the next several months. Under the circumstances, home electrification specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say, most women will have to depend on the electrical equipment they already have for some time to come.

Meanwhile, of course, your appliances are getting older and a little nearer to point of wearing out. In fact, according to the law of averages, if you have eight or ten electric appliances in your home, at least one of them will probably wear ou or get broken during the next 12 months. That is, with ordinary care. With better than ordinary care, you can reasonably expect to stretch the life of your applianc by weeks or even months.

One way to make your appliances last longer is to avoid overworking them. Th doesn't mean not using them. It means making their necessary work as easy as possible.

Take your electric washer, for example. If it sits in an unheated room durin the winter, the grease around the shafts and gears gets hard and stiff....just lik

a car in cold weather. Of course that means that your motor has to start an extra heavy load...do extra heavy work which may shorten its life. On the other hand, if you move the machine into a heated room to let it warm up or fill the tub with hot water a few minutes before you start the washer, the machine will start easily without placing too much of a starting load on the motor.

That's only one way of saving unnecessary work for your washer. Soaking the clothes for 20 minutes or more before putting them in the tub will make the washing machine's job easier and quicker. Using plenty of hot water and good soap will also help. Many homemakers make their electric washers work overtime needlessly because they do not follow the manufacturer's instructions. Perhaps they put too many clothes in the tub at one time or wash their clothes longer than necessary. Five to 10 minutes is enough for ordinary cotton and linen while 10 to 15 minutes is enough for very soiled cotton. If clothes are not clean in 15 minutes, they need another washing in clean suds.

Now a word about vacuum sweepers. Unless your sweeper is working properly, you may have to go over rugs a number of times to get them clean. This means extra wear and tear on the sweeper, on the rug and on you too. So first, empty the dirt bag or container...after every general cleaning, as a rule. A vacuum cleaner half clogged up by dirt can do only half a job. Then, if your cleaner has an adjustable nozzle, make sure it is set so that it makes a good seal with the rug when the vacuum sweeper is in use. Keep the rotating beaters or brushes free from string and lint and keep the belt tight, so the brushes can do their fair share of the cleaning. Altogether, a vacuum cleaner which is in good trim throughout will work faster and better, and stay on the job longer.

Finally, let's look to the refrigerator. Unless you are willing to have your refrigerator put in a great deal of needless overtime, make sure it is located in a cool part of the kitchen, away from radiators, hot-air registers or other sources of heat. And don't crowd it into a niche or alcove where air can't circulate

around it. Specialists say that to work most efficiently, place your refrigerator so there is at least 2½ inches of space for the air to circulate at the back and around the sides and a foot or more air space on top.

But even a properly located refrigerator will be kept working overtime it the condenser is blanketed with dust so that the air cannot circulate around it easily. The condenser, you know, looks like a small radiator and is located at the back of the refrigerator or beneath the food compartment, near the motor. To clean it, disconnect the refrigerator and brush off the dust with a long handled brush or clean it with the dusting attachment on your vacuum cleaner. The condenser needs cleaning at least every six months...more often if it gets dusty very quickly.

Frost on the freezing unit inside the refrigerator will also make the motor run extra hours if you let it get too thick. So the rule, "Defrost whenever the ice gets a quarter of an inch thick" is a good one to follow. Otherwise the ice itself will act as a blanket around the freezing unit and the m chanism will have to work harder and longer to cool the food compartment.

Well, those are just a few of the little things which make electric appliances work needlessly and which send electrical equipment to the scrapheap before it has served out its fall term of usefulness. Probably you can think of many other practical things to do which will also add months to the lives of these and other appliances. Together they add up to better care and more efficient use -- better wartime help and the assurance that when the war is over your appliances will still be on the job.

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